



# Introduction

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THIS ISSUE of *Library Trends* presents a professional survey and an assessment of the progress which has been made to date by American librarians serving the field of adult education. If all the accomplishments reported have not been as important, so far-reaching or as widely accepted as might be wished, these facts may be regarded as challenges for the future.

The articles written for this issue have been prepared by individuals who know libraries and adult education intimately from personal use and study, travel, and/or direct participation. If their general tone of optimism does not always appear fully warranted by the facts they report, perhaps it can be said that optimism, enthusiasm, and personal dedication are among the most distinguishing characteristics of all those, including librarians, who work and write in behalf of adult education.

Now, without going very much into detail, it might be helpful to review briefly the basic plan of the issue, to note some of the chief points made by its authors, and to identify a few common threads which seem to run through the articles.

The first statement, prepared by Robert Blakely, vice president of the Fund for Adult Education, offers a general view of the adult education movement projected into 1980. The next several articles, authored by practicing librarians, review basic concepts and practices in adult education as these are administered by librarians working in various types of libraries and serving different kinds and sizes of communities. Three reports by specialists identify and evaluate library needs for research in adult education, the status of professional library training for adult education work, and contemporary adult education program methods and techniques employed by libraries.

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Finally, and in keeping with the increased responsibilities which adult education has brought to the profession of librarianship, an article by Sigrid Edge reviews the significant contributions which have been made by the American Library Association to nationwide development of appropriate library roles for advancing the adult education movement.

In outlining some of the chief points made in this issue, it may be said that Blakely's article affords a perspective view of the adult education movement which identifies the chief problems which currently impede development of the field including (1) the prevailing public apathy with respect to adult education (based on a faulty image of the field and its activities); (2) lack of cooperation and vitiating rivalry among educational institutions; (3) too frequent misalliance with or the harnessing of educational talents to serve narrow interests of powerful professional and social groups; (4) scarcity of funds. Even so, according to Blakely, we are now "looking toward the emergence of an *educative society* all of whose members and institutions are concerned with what they are doing to help individuals become the best they are capable of and what they are doing to help the nation fulfill its promised destiny."

The next two articles, written by librarians now working in the field, review the main roles played by public libraries in serving adult education. Marion Hawes, head of adult services for the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore, comments on those activities appropriate for the large metropolitan community and assesses some of the current trends. Jerome Cushman, librarian, Free Public Library in Salina, Kansas, lists the distinctive problems of providing adequate service for smaller communities.

It is Mrs. Hawes' opinion that while most public librarians are responding to some of the major challenges of our time including the development of more adequate service to the aging, "a significant and serious gap is the lack of concern for the effects of scientific and technological developments on society." Mrs. Hawes suggests that "public librarians may feel they are not competent in this area" and suggests further in the form of a question that here may be an opportunity for special librarians familiar with subject matter to sponsor joint undertakings with public libraries. Cushman sums up a common concern of many librarians by saying that too much library effort is currently being spent on elaborate "programming for trivia."

Frequently adult education, as conceived by librarians, is con-

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sidered almost solely to be the province of public libraries. There are, however, many new and important library roles to be filled in providing research materials, developing information services, working out cooperative relationships with extension divisions and in serving special groups, such as parents, teachers. In his article on the subject, Arthur Hamlin, director of libraries for the University of Cincinnati, gives information about academic, research, and special library services to adult education which may indicate some future changes. Commenting on the fact that in most instances college and university librarians have not established definite adult education objectives, Hamlin points out that before a college or university library can be of much help in the adult education movement generally, institutions of higher education must first see their own adult education roles and responsibilities clearly. Hamlin stresses the need for increased college and university service to the communities served and the need for more cooperation among various types of libraries which might be rendered by supplementing local offerings and by providing advisory assistance for the use of special collections.

State library agencies enjoy unique opportunities, resources, and facilities to foster the development of public library participation in adult education on both a state and a regional basis. The state agency can also be a clearinghouse for pertinent information as well as give a stimulus to cooperative endeavors on the part of many types of libraries. Uniquely, and especially since the passage of the Library Services Act, the state agency is able (although too little has actually been done) to lead in the development of services to less densely populated areas. Through the provision of demonstrations, workshops, institutes, and many forms of in-service training state library agencies can nourish and foster development of interest and skills necessary to be effective in doing adult education tasks. Muriel Fuller, library consultant, Michigan State Library, advances a number of positive suggestions in each of these directions.

The research bibliography on adult education issued recently by the Fund for Adult Education contains a basic index of significant studies and reports covering the entire field. However, insofar as librarians are concerned, further and continuing identification of the most important areas in which additional work is required and the evaluation of what has already been accomplished (as well as the suggestion of things which should come) is very much needed. The literature on library work, experimentation and research in the field

of adult education is seriously deficient. According to Eleanor Phinney, executive secretary, A.L.A. Adult Services Division, whose article deals generally with the research and evaluation needed in adult education, we now require not only much more complete reporting of past research and experiments, but many new studies as well. She states that the need for research is most pressing in four areas including the need for much more complete definition of library purposes, scope and roles; patron guidance; the effects of reading; and the evaluation of services. The area of greatest concern relates to patron guidance. Miss Phinney looks for the more active engagement of library schools in adult education research in direct cooperation with librarians working in the field. Miss Phinney is indebted to the following individuals for their comments on the adult education research needs: Robert S. Ake, Lester Asheim, Leon Carnovsky, Lucile Dudgeon, Sigrid Edge, Muriel Fuller, Marion E. Hawes, Evalene P. Jackson, Malcolm S. Knowles, Alice L. LeFevre, Irving Lieberman, Frederic J. O'Harra, Hannis S. Smith, and Donald E. Strout.

Irving Lieberman, director of the University of Washington School of Library Service, comments on new adult education methods and techniques which reflect the increasing use and distribution of audiovisual materials and growing professional interest in library utilization of television. Pointing out that larger libraries continue to do the best job, Lieberman pleads for imaginative adaptations consistent with adult education objectives which have been clearly defined.

Increased interest in the training of librarians for work in adult education (as evidenced in the Allerton Park Conference Report mentioned by several contributors) calls for continuing assessment of the adequacy of training activities now going on including both formal and informal programs and for identification of various kinds, levels, methods, and distinctive characteristics of training programs which are or ought especially to be encouraged. Margaret Monroe, professor, Rutgers University Graduate Library School, writes that "thirty years of experimentation and analysis of public libraries have brought the library profession to a place where it can begin to think in terms of education" for the work of library adult education through the education of practitioners to perform well and through research looking towards innovations and improvement. Public library contributions to the preparation of librarians for adult education work should take the form of post-graduate study of practices and innovations. Miss Monroe echoes the comment that among more serious de-

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iciencies, lack of research is the chief shortcoming. To date, library schools have shown little leadership in this most appropriate area.

Through the years the A.L.A. has played a vital role in developing the adult education movement in the United States. A review of its various committee activities, cooperative projects, and general planning for the development of adult education on the part of librarians working together through their national association has produced a significant record of accomplishment. Sigrid Edge, professor, Simmons College School of Library Science, presents the record of these accomplishments and gives a personal point-of-view.

Several conclusions might be drawn from reading at one sitting the articles which make up this issue of *Library Trends*. First, viewing the scene through darker glasses, the contributors seem to be saying that while the challenges of adult education are great (especially for public librarians) a small group of people in a few larger libraries have been and are still doing most of the important work. Further, the work which is now being done is severely handicapped by the lack of well-defined local objectives, lack of professional understanding and acceptance, and by the lack of adequate adult education training of library personnel. Strong programs of research remain to be developed, and there is still too much lip service being paid to adult education simply as a means of keeping up with the library Joneses rather than for development of a sound professional philosophy.

A review of the several articles may also lead one to note the frequent repetition of a small number of names and references and thus to realize the limited growth which the field has actually achieved to date. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, it would appear that librarians (as members of a professional group) are still not ready to endorse that degree of professionalization of adult education work which would encourage the recruitment, training, and employment of specialists. Thus, despite a commitment to partnership in the educational enterprise, which has been advanced for more than a century as basic in American library philosophy, it is still, as J. W. Powell has said, "for the lack of a teacher's impulse [that] libraries have remained places *from* which books are taken rather than centers *in* which a community may cultivate the skill and power of its thinking. . . . The education of librarians (where it rises above sheer management) stresses a scholarship of content rather than the contagion of ideas . . . [and so] the library is essentially a casework book-resource agency; and neither its staff nor its sponsors, be they public officials or private

trustees would be prepared in our time to launch the library into a full fledged teaching career." Adult education remains for too many librarians a bright idea, a fad, or simply a fringe activity regardless of how frenetically it may appear to be pursued.

On the positive side there are, of course, a number of more encouraging signs. ". . . Berea College had its bookmobile, horse-drawn, of course, on the roads of the Appalachians by 1916. It still uses mule-drawn skids to get book collections back into the hollows where no roads exist." There is adult education pioneering and exploration going on in many fields of librarianship. The important stature which adult education work has attained in some larger libraries and the success of projects sponsored by the A.L.A. in cooperation with other educational groups have exercised a strong positive influence. Also, there is a growing number of libraries and library systems across the country which do meet qualifications set forth by Mrs. Hawes: "To sum up, blessing and conviction at the top, wide staff involvement and interest, deft and dynamic leadership, a high degree of community relatedness and cooperation, and an organizational structure are factors which are apparent in those institutions which have an outstanding program."

Finally, leaders in the profession are constantly seeking to find those ways in which the images of adult education and of librarianship can be changed in both the public and in the professional mind so that those who enter the profession may come to accept more fully and be trained more adequately for fulfillment of their proper roles in educating the adult community.